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#70

Atty. Docket No. STE01 P-798B

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Appln. No. : 08/998,302  
Art Unit : 2735  
Applicant : Joel D. Stanfield et al.  
Filing Date : December 24, 1997  
For : ELECTRONIC SYSTEM, COMPONENTS AND METHOD FOR TRACKING FILES

2701  
10/13/98  
Zimmerman

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Attn.: Director of Group 2700  
Washington, D.C. 20231

PETITION UNDER 37 C.F.R. §1.144

Applicants hereby petition the Commissioner to review the restriction requirement made in the June 8, 1998, Office Action for the above-identified patent application. Applicants respectfully submit that the restriction requirement as set forth in the Office Action is improper and should be withdrawn.

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As described below, the Examiner has now imposed an eight-way restriction requirement on claims that he has already searched and rejected several times. In making the restriction requirement, the Examiner did not provide any basis for his conclusions as to why some of the eight groups are distinct from each other. Further, the Examiner has misinterpreted the standard for a subcombination/subcombination restriction in such a way that any dependent claims could be restricted from one another without identifying common independent claims as generic.

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## **I. Background**

### **A. The Originally Filed Claims**

This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application No. 08/379,944. In the parent application, a six-way restriction requirement was made. After convincing the Examiner to join two of the identified groups, Applicants elected and prosecuted the two rejoined groups. Having obtained allowance of some of the claims of the two elected groups in the parent application, Applicants canceled the rejected claims from the parent application so that the allowed claims could issue in a patent at an earlier date than if those claims were maintained in an application in which the rejected claims were appealed. Thus, it was Applicants' intent to pursue the rejected claims from the parent application in this application with full knowledge that it may be necessary to appeal the rejections on those claims to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences.

The claims now presented in this application were all included in the elected claims of the parent application. During prosecution of the parent application, the Examiner had prepared and mailed several Office Actions in which all of the claims pending in this application had been examined and rejected. Despite the fact that the Examiner had already examined all the claims pending in this application several times over during the prosecution in the parent application, the Examiner now is requiring restriction of these claims into eight different groups. To assist the group director in reviewing this restriction requirement, Applicants have attached as Appendix A a chart showing the relative dependencies of all the

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pending claims, and have also attached as Appendix B a printout of all the pending claims as presented at the time the restriction requirement was made.

B. The Restriction Requirement

The restriction requirement as set forth in the June 8, 1998, Office Action and as modified by a telephone interview (see the Interview Summary Record dated June 29, 1998) effectively reads as follows:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Claims</u>
I.	1-6, 19, 23-33
II.	1, 7-10, 19, 23, 61, 62
III.	1, 11, 19, 23, 39-41
IV.	1, 12-14, 19, 23, 54, 59, 60, 63
V.	1, 12, 13, 15, 19, 23, 53, 54, 57, 58
VI.	1, 12, 13, 16-23, 54-56
VII.	1, 12, 13, 19, 23, 34-38, 54
VIII.	1, 19, 23, 42-52

As is apparent, claims 1, 19, and 23 are included in each one of Groups I through VIII.

Further, Groups IV through VII all include claims 12, 13, and 54.

In the June 8, 1998, Office Action, the Examiner states that invention Groups I, II, III, and VIII are related as subcombinations disclosed as usable together in a single combination, and that Groups IV, V, VI, and VII are patentably distinct species. The Examiner did not, however, provide any basis as to why any one of Groups I, II, III, and VIII are patentably

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distinct from any one of Groups IV, V, VI, and VII. When challenged about the absence of such a basis in Applicants' response with traverse filed on July 2, 1998, the Examiner merely stated "Examples of distinctness between the subcombinations have been shown in paragraph #2 Office Action 6/8/98." However, paragraph 2 does not even mention any of Groups IV through VII.

**C. Further Proceedings Regarding Restriction Requirement**

As noted above, Applicants responded to the restriction requirement by electing Group VII with traverse in a response filed July 2, 1998. In that response/election, Applicants made extensive arguments as to why the restriction requirement was not proper. The Examiner responded in a first Office Action on the merits mailed August 31, 1998, stating that the restriction requirement was upheld. Noting that the Examiner did not state that the restriction requirement had been made final, the undersigned attorney called the Examiner on October 5, 1998, and was advised by the Examiner that he had intended to make the restriction requirement final and that he would mail an Interview Summary Record acknowledging that the restriction requirement was made final. Therefore, a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.144 is now proper.

**II. Reason Why the Restriction Requirement Is Improper and Should Be Withdrawn**

Applicants submit that the restriction requirement is improper for several reasons. More specifically, the Examiner (1) has failed to state any reason why the claims of any one of Groups I through III and VIII are patentably distinct from any one of Groups IV through VII,

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(2) has contrived a basis for restricting between subcombination claims that would apply to any two claims that are dependent upon a common independent claim, and (3) has not established that the alleged "species" are mutually exclusive. Additionally, the Examiner has not identified claims 1, 19, and 23 as generic claims, even though they are included in each of the designated groups and include claims that depend therefrom from all the different restricted groups.

As pointed out in MPEP §816, an Examiner is required to state the specific reasons for a holding of independence or distinctness amongst each of the identified invention groups relative to one another. Here the Examiner has failed to indicate how the claims of any one of Groups I through III and VIII are independent or distinct from the claims of any one of Groups IV through VII. For example, it is not at all clear how the invention defined in the claims of Group III or VIII can be independent or distinct from the invention defined by the claims of Group VII. As shown in the claims chart of Appendix A, independent claim 34 and claim 38, which depends directly from claim 34, are included in Group VII. Claims 39 through 41, which depend directly from claim 38, however, are included in Group III. Claim 42, which depends directly from independent claim 34, is included in Group VIII. Certainly, since claim 42 includes all the limitations of claim 34, the invention of claim 42 cannot be considered independent or distinct as a combination/subcombination or as two separate species from the invention defined in independent claim 34. Similarly, each of claims 39 through 41 include all the limitations of claims 38 and 34. In the Office Action mailed August 31, 1998, the Examiner has indicated that claim 38 is allowable. It is not understood why, for example,

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claims 39 through 41 continue to be considered withdrawn from consideration, since they must by definition also be allowable by their dependence on claim 38. Hence, there appears to be no reason for requiring a restriction requirement between the inventions defined by these various claim groups.

Clearly, the fact that the Examiner has not stated any reasons for restriction between the invention defined in any one of Groups I through III and VIII and any one of Groups IV through VII, the Examiner has not met his burden in establishing any initial grounds for the restriction relative to each of these groups. If the Patent Office ultimately decides that all eight groups are independent or distinct from one another, at a minimum, it should be held that independent claims 1, 19, and 23 are generic claims that, if found allowable, would require rejoinder of all the claims of the various identified invention groups. Obviously, if a claim such as claim 1 were allowed, the inventions defined in Groups I through VII, which are defined by claims that depend from claim 1, would be also be allowable, and there would be no additional burden on the Examiner. Furthermore, to the extent it becomes necessary for Applicants to appeal the Examiner's rejection of any claims in this application, it would be in the Patent Office's own interest to allow all the claims to be grouped together and thereby significantly reduce the number of divisional applications and appeals that Applicants would be required to file before the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences.

With respect to the restriction between Groups I through III and VIII, the Examiner states that the inventions defined in these groups are related as subcombinations disclosed as usable together in a single combination. The Examiner then incorrectly states the standard for

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determining whether subcombinations are distinct from one another by stating “the subcombinations are distinct from each other if they are shown to be separately usable.” The Examiner gives but one example of different uses of the subcombinations by stating “the database of Group VIII can be used in a file locator system which does not have indicators on the file.” Thus, it is clear that the Examiner is only taking into consideration whether the subcombinations themselves may be separately used from one another. This logic would apply to any subcombinations. Moreover, the Examiner has not provided examples for each of the various groups, since only the claims of Group I even recite the use of indicators on the files.

The proper test for determining whether subcombinations are independent and distinct is stated in MPEP §806.05(d), which states that the Examiner must show that each one of the subcombinations has utility other than in *the disclosed combination*. Thus, the separate utility is not shown relative to each of the subcombinations, but rather to the combination. In making the restriction requirement, the Examiner did not provide any examples of where the alleged subcombinations may be used apart from the disclosed combination. If the test established by the Examiner were correct, virtually all dependent claims could be restricted from one another.

For the reasons stated above, Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner has failed to provide an adequate and proper basis for concluding that the inventions of Groups I through III and VIII are patentably distinct subcombinations, and therefore, restriction between these invention groups should be withdrawn.

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With respect to the restriction requirement amongst Groups IV through VII, the Examiner stated that the inventions defined in these groups are species groups of the retainer used in a file locator system.

For such a restriction to be proper, it is incumbent upon the Examiner to show that each of the species claims define characteristics of the invention that are mutually exclusive of one of the characteristics defined in the other species claims. MPEP §806.04(e) defines "species" as follows:

*Species are always the specifically different embodiments.*

Species are *usually* but not always independent as disclosed (see MPEP §806.04(b)) since there is usually no disclosure of relationship therebetween. The fact that a genus for two different embodiments is capable of being conceived and defined, does not affect the independence of the embodiments, where the case under consideration contains no disclosure of any commonality of operation, function or effect.

Most significantly, MPEP §804.04(f) states:

Claims to be restricted to different species *must be mutually exclusive*. The general test as to when claims are restricted, respectively, to different species is the fact that one claim recites limitations which under the disclosure are found in a first species but not in a second, while a second claim recites limitations disclosed only for the second species and not the first. This is frequently expressed by saying that the claims to be restricted to different species, must recite the mutually exclusive characteristics of such species.

As explained below, the alleged "species" claims restricted into different groups do not define mutually exclusive characteristics of the invention. In fact, the specification clearly teaches that all the recited characteristics may be found in a single system constructed in accordance with the present invention. Fig. 1 clearly shows a system including most, if not all, of the different types of disclosed folder retainers that may be used in the inventive system.



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In the August 31, 1998, Office Action, the Examiner responded by stating "Merely because all the claimed species can be operated in the same system is not evidence that the species are not mutually exclusive." It is noted, however, that it is incumbent upon an Examiner to provide evidence that the species are, in fact, defined by features that are mutually exclusive. Until the Examiner meets this burden, Applicants do not need to provide such evidence. Further, the fact that claimed features can be implemented together is evidence that such features are not mutually exclusive. Mutually exclusive features, by definition, are features that may be implemented only to the exclusion of each other. As pointed out below, the features recited in the claims falling in Groups IV through VII may be implemented together, and hence, not to the mutual exclusion of one another.

With respect to the inventions defined in Groups IV through VII, the Examiner has indicated that claims 12, 13, and 54 are generic to those species claims. Of particular interest is claim 54, which recites a file tracking system comprising a *plurality* of folder retainers. As clearly disclosed in the application and hence recited in dependent claims 55-60, which correspond to Groups IV through VI, only one of a plurality of folder retainers needs to be a particular type of folder retainer. Specifically, the system having a plurality of folder retainers may include a shelf, file cabinet, and file tray as clearly shown in Fig. 1. Because each of these "species" may be used together in a single embodiment, the different types of folder retainers do not define mutually exclusive characteristics of the system. Since the different types of folder retainers disclosed and claimed in this application are not mutually exclusive of one another, Applicants submit that a restriction between these different types of folder

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retainers is clearly improper, and the restriction requirement therebetween should be withdrawn.

### **III. Conclusion**

For the reasons stated above, Applicants respectfully submit that the restriction requirement as presented in this application is improper and should be withdrawn. Applicants further point out that there appears to be no significant burden on the Examiner for rejoining all of the various invention groups, since there are broad claims that encompass all the groups. Further, the fact that the various inventions require different searches does not present any additional burden on the Examiner, since he has already performed these searches and made rejections of these claims when presented in the parent application. Applicants further point out that the regrouping of all the claims in this application will serve to consolidate all these claims should an appeal to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences become necessary. Otherwise, Applicants will file seven additional divisional applications, which will then need to be separately appealed thereby consuming the valuable time of the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences. As an alternative, Applicants ask that the Commissioner at least consider identifying claims 1, 19, and 23 as generic claims that, if allowed, would require regrouping of all the claims of the various groups.

For the reasons stated above, Applicants submit that the restriction requirement should be withdrawn, and therefore request such action. The petition fee of \$130 is enclosed. If any

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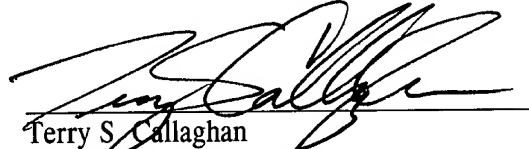
additional fees are required, Applicants request that they be charged to deposit account  
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Respectfully submitted,

JOEL D. STANFIELD ET AL.

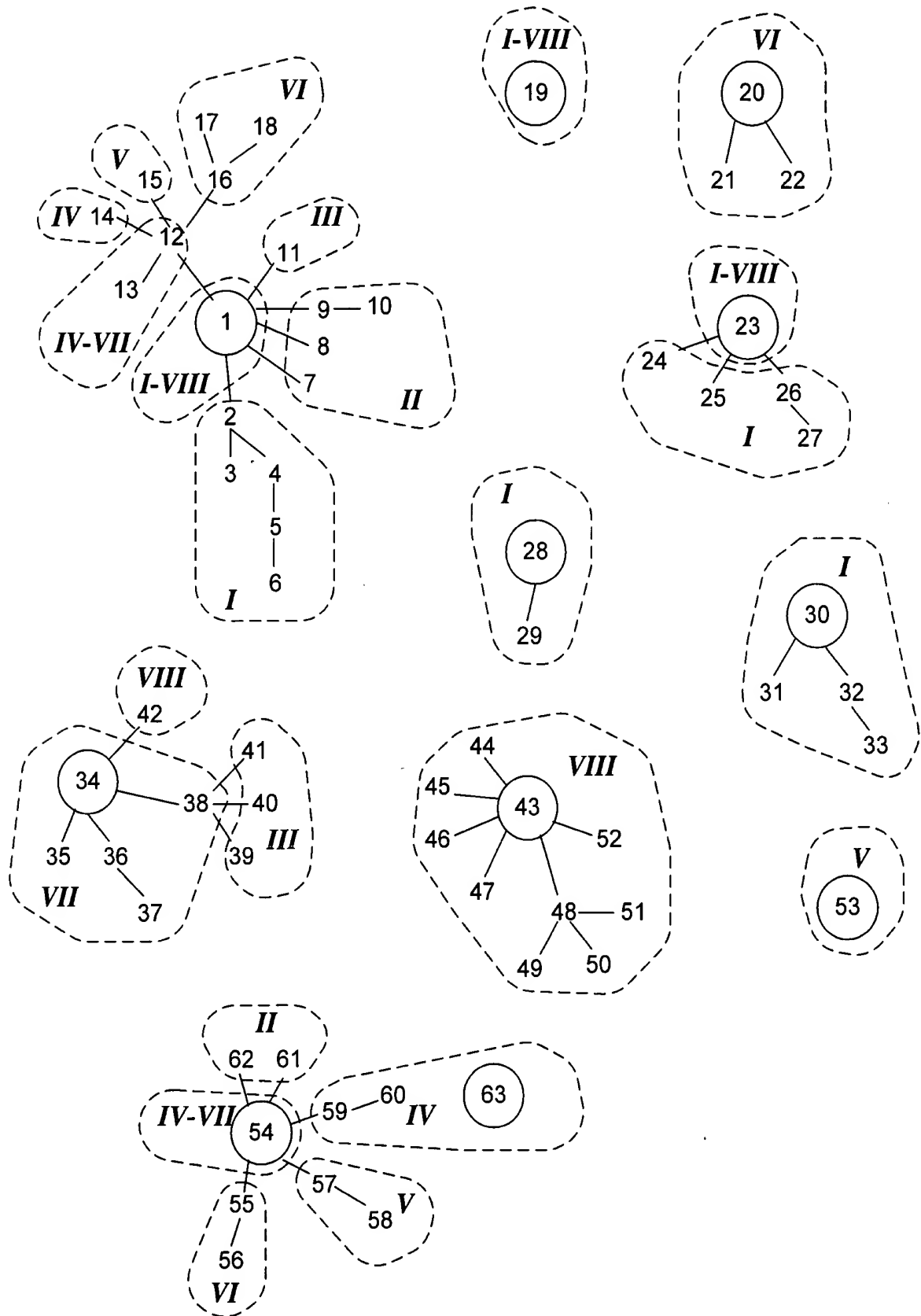
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# APPENDIX A



CLAIMS

1. A file tracking system comprising:
  - a database for maintaining file location and unique file addresses for a plurality of files;
  - a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;
  - a bus connected to said processor;
  - a folder retainer connected to said processor by said bus; and
  - a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer, each addressable device being responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor so that said processor may maintain the file location of each file in said database.
2. The file tracking system of claim 1, further including an indicator located on one of said file folders, wherein said addressable device includes an addressable switch and said indicator is activated when said addressable switch receives a control signal from said processor including the unique address corresponding to the file folder.
3. The file tracking system of claim 2, further including:
  - an input device for receiving commands and file identification information from an operator and providing the commands and file identification information to said processor,

wherein, when the operator inputs a command to search for a specific file, said processor accesses a unique address and file location stored in said database as corresponding to input file identification information identifying the specific file to be searched for, displays the file location, and transmits a control signal including the unique address to the addressable switch of the file folder containing the specific file causing the addressable switch to activate the indicator.

4. The file tracking system of claim 2, wherein said addressable switch includes:

a ROM having the unique file address stored therein;

address comparing means for comparing an address included in a control signal received from said the processor with the unique address stored in said ROM; and

state changing means for changing the state of said addressable switch when said address comparing means determines that the address included in the received control signal is the same as the unique address stored in said ROM.

5. The file tracking system of claim 4, wherein said addressable switch further includes a load transistor having a gate, a source, and a drain, said gate connected to said state changing means, wherein said state changing means changes the state of said addressable switch by turning on and off said load transistor.

6. The file tracking system of claim 5, wherein said indicator is an indicator light having a first terminal connected to said first conductor, and a second terminal connected to said source of said load transistor, wherein said drain of said load transistor is connected to said second

conductor, and said indicator light is turned on when said load transistor is turned on by said state changing means.

7. The file tracking system of claim 1, wherein said processor includes:

polling means for periodically polling said file folders to determine the presence and location of each file folder;

means for updating said database when said polling means determines that a file location is different from the location previously stored or that a file that said database previously indicated as present is no longer present.

8. The file tracking system of claim 1, wherein said processor is a personal computer.

9. The file tracking system of claim 1, wherein said processor is any one of a plurality of computers connected to a local area network.

10. The file tracking system of claim 9, wherein said database is a distributed database accessible by any one of said plurality of computers.

11. The file tracking system of claim 1, wherein each of said file folders further include:

a surface;

a first conductor on said surface for providing control signals to said addressable device when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer; and

a second conductor on said surface for providing a ground to said addressable device.

12. The file tracking system of claim 1, wherein said folder retainer includes:
- at least one surface;
  - a first conductive rail positioned on said surface for providing power and control signals to the addressable devices positioned on said plurality of file folders when said file folders are placed in said folder retainer; and
  - a second conductive rail positioned on said surface for providing a ground to the addressable devices when said plurality of file folders are placed in said folder retainer.
13. The file tracking system of claim 12, wherein at least one of said first and second conductive rails are integrated into a suspension rail of a file drawer upon which hanging file folders may be suspended.
14. The file tracking system of claim 12, wherein said folder retainer includes a plurality of shelves, and at least one of said first and second conductive rails are located on at least one of said shelves.
15. The file tracking system of claim 12, wherein said folder retainer is a file tray, wherein at least one of said first and second conductors are positioned in said file tray.
16. The file tracking system of claim 12, wherein said surface is an interior surface of a file drawer for use in a file cabinet, wherein at least one of said first and second conductive rails are positioned in said file drawer.



17. The file tracking system of claim 16, wherein at least one of said first and second conductive rails are positioned along a bottom of said file drawer.

18. The file tracking system of claim 16, wherein at least one of said first and second conductors are positioned along a side of said file drawer.

19. A file tracking system comprising:

a database for maintaining file location and unique file addresses for a plurality of files;

a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;

a bus connected to said processor;

an input device for receiving commands and file identification information from an operator and providing the commands and file identification information to said processor;

a plurality of folder retainers each connected to said bus via an addressable switch having a unique address, and each including an indicator for indicating the presence of a searched for file folder that is located therein; and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable switch adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer, and each including an indicator that is activated when said addressable switch receives a control signal from said processor including the unique address corresponding to the file folder,

wherein, when the operator inputs a command to search for a specific file, said processor

identifies a first unique address and file location stored in said database as corresponding to input file identification information identifying the specific file to be searched for,

displays the file location,

identifies a second unique address in said database for the addressable switch of the folder retainer in which the searched for file folder is located,

transmits a control signal that energizes a segment of said bus within the folder retainer corresponding to the searched for file,

transmits a control signal including the second unique address to the addressable switch of the folder retainer causing the indicator of the folder retainer to activate, and

transmits a control signal including the first unique address to the addressable switch of the file folder containing the specific file causing the addressable switch to activate the indicator located on the file folder.

20. A file tracking system comprising:

a database for maintaining file location and unique file folder address for a plurality of files, and a unique drawer address of each file drawer in which the files are located;

a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;

a bus connected to said processor;

a plurality of file cabinets, connected to said processor by said bus, each of said file cabinets including a plurality of file drawers, each file drawer having:

an outer face,

an addressable drawer indicator switch including a unique drawer address,  
a drawer indicator light connected to said addressable drawer indicator switch and located on said outer face the file drawer,  
a first conductive rail connected to said bus for receiving control signals from said processor, and  
a second conductive rail for providing a ground,  
wherein said addressable drawer indicator switch illuminates said drawer indicator light when said addressable drawer indicator switch receives a control signal from said processor including the unique drawer address corresponding to the file drawer; and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable folder indicator switch and a folder indicator light, wherein said addressable folder indicator switch is connected to said first and second conductive rails when the file folder is placed in one of said file drawers, and said folder indicator light is illuminated when said addressable folder indicator switch receives a control signal from said processor including the unique folder address corresponding to the file folder.

21. The file tracking system of claim 20, wherein said database additionally maintains a unique cabinet address, and said file cabinets each further include an addressable cabinet indicator switch connected to said bus and having a unique cabinet indicator address, and a cabinet indicator light connected to said addressable cabinet indicator switch, wherein said addressable cabinet indicator switch illuminates said cabinet indicator light when said addressable cabinet indicator switch

receives a control signal from said processor including the unique cabinet indicator address corresponding to the file cabinet.

22. The file tracking system of claim 20, wherein said first conductive rail provides power to said addressable folder indicator switches and said addressable drawer indicator switches.

23. A method of locating a file comprising the steps of:

- inputting information identifying the file to be located;
- accessing a database to determine a present location of the file, a unique identification code associated with a receiver at the present location of the file, and a unique identification code associated with the file;
- transmitting a first control signal to the receiver at the present location of the file, the first control signal including the unique identification code of the receiver, transmitting a second control signal to the file, the second control signal including the unique identification code of the file; and
- activating an annunciator in response to receipt of one of the first and second control signals.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the annunciator is located on the file.

25. The method of claim 23, wherein the annunciator is located on the receiver.

26. The method of claim 23, wherein the annunciator is an indicator light.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein said indicator light is located on the file and wherein the method further includes the step of illuminating a second indicator light on the receiver in response to receipt of the first control signal at the receiver.

28. A method of locating a file comprising the steps of:  
inputting information identifying the file to be located;  
accessing a database to determine a present location of the file, a unique identification code associated with a folder retainer in which the file is located, and a unique identification code associated with the file;  
transmitting a control signal to the file, the control signal including the unique identification code of the file and the unique identification code of the folder retainer; and  
illuminating an indicator light on the file in response to receipt of the control signal at the file.

29. The method of claim 28, further including the step of illuminating a second indicator light on the folder retainer in response to receipt of the control signal at the folder retainer.

30. A file locating system comprising:  
a database for maintaining file location and unique file addresses for a plurality of files;  
a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;  
a bus connected to said processor;  
a folder retainer, connected to said processor by said bus;

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable switch connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer;

a file locating device adapted to aid in the location of a file folder in response to control signals issued by said controller; and

a conductor provided in said folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders.

31. The file locating system of claim 30, wherein said file locating device is an indicator light located on the file folder.

32. The file locating system of claim 30, further including:

input means for inputting information identifying the file folder to be located, wherein said processor accesses said database to determine a present location of the identified file folder, a unique identification code associated with a folder retainer in which the file folder is presently located, and a unique identification code associated with the file folder,

said processor transmits a control signal to the folder retainer in which the file folder is located, the control signal including the unique identification code of the file folder and the unique identification code of the folder retainer, and

said file locating device includes an annunciator activatable in response to receipt of the control signal, said annunciator being located on said folder retainer.

33. The file locating system of claim 32, wherein said annunciator is an indicator light.

34. An electronic file tracking system comprising:

a database for maintaining file identity, file location, and unique file addresses for a plurality of files;

a processor for issuing control signals;

a folder retainer having electrical contacts communicatively coupled to said processor; and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically coupled to said bus when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer, and a conductor located on said file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions.

35. The electronic file tracking system of claim 34, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts.

36. The electronic file tracking system of claim 34, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions with respect to an adjacent file folder.

37. The electronic file tracking system of claim 36, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different rotated positions with respect to an adjacent file folder.

38. The electronic file tracking system of claim 34, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder.

39. The electronic file tracking system of claim 38, wherein at least one of said plurality of locations is the side surface of said file folder.

40. The electronic file tracking system of claim 38, wherein at least one of said plurality of locations is the edge surface of said file folder.

41. The electronic file tracking system of claim 38, wherein one of said plurality of locations is the side surface and another one of said plurality of locations is the edge surface of said file folder.

42. The electronic file tracking system of claim 34, and further comprising a database for maintaining file location and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, wherein said processor interfaces with said database.



43. A file locating system comprising:

a database for maintaining file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, said database further maintains general file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, accessibility permission lists for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files;

a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;

a bus connected to said processor;

a folder retainer, connected to said processor by said bus;

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable switch connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer; and

a file locating device adapted to aid in the location of a file folder in response to control signals issued by said controller.

44. The file locating system of claim 43, wherein the general file information stored in said database includes a key word list, which lists certain key words that describe or may be found in a file.

45. The file locating system of claim 43, wherein the general file information stored in said database includes file classification, which indicates any classification groups with which a file folder is associated.

46. The file locating system of claim 43, wherein the general file information stored in said database includes accessibility permission lists, which are used to prevent certain individuals from accessing certain file folders.

47. The file tracking system of claim 43 and further including a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus and remotely located relative to a memory device in which said database is stored, wherein the location descriptions stored in said database for each of said plurality of files identifies the folder retainer in which the corresponding file folder is located.

48. The file tracking system of claim 43, wherein said historical information includes at least one of file location history, file access history, and file retention history.

49. The file tracking system of claim 48, wherein the historical information stored in said database includes file location history, which indicates the locations and dates at which a file folder has been located over a period of time.

50. The file tracking system of claim 48, wherein the historical information stored in said database includes file access history, which indicates who checked out a file folder and when the file folder was checked in or out.

51. The file tracking system of claim 48, wherein the historical information stored in said database includes file retention history, which identifies the length of time since a file folder was last accessed in order to determine whether the file may be purged.

52. The file tracking system of claim 43, wherein said database further maintains a time stamp for a plurality of files indicating a time that a file was added, removed, and/or detected at a new location.

53. A file tracking system comprising:

- a processor for issuing control signals;
- a folder retainer having electrical contacts communicatively coupled to said processor; and
- a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to said contacts of said folder retainer,

wherein said folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer, is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow.

54. A file tracking system comprising:

- a processor for issuing control signals;
- a plurality of folder retainers communicatively coupled to said processor, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders; and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be communicatively coupled to said processor when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.

55. The file tracking system of claim 54, wherein said at least one folder retainer is configured to support hanging file folders.
56. The file tracking system of claim 55, wherein said at least one folder retainer is a file cabinet drawer.
57. The file tracking system of claim 54, wherein said at least one folder retainer is configured to support file folders stacked vertically on top of one another.
58. The file tracking system of claim 57, wherein said at least one folder retainer is a file tray.
59. The file tracking system of claim 54, wherein said at least one folder retainer is configured to support file folders that horizontally abut one another.
60. The file tracking system of claim 59, wherein said at least one folder retainer is a shelf.
61. The file tracking system of claim 54, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is communicatively coupled to said processor by an RF link.

62. The file tracking system of claim 54, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is communicatively coupled to said processor by a bus.

63. A file tracking system comprising:

- a database for maintaining file identity, file location, and unique file addresses for a plurality of files;

- a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;

- a bus connected to said processor;

- a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders; and

- a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.